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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of a preemployment program that was initiated at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School in Waukegan, Illinois, was examined through a follow-up survey of the program's graduates. The survey population consisted of all 176 individuals who had participated in the preemployment club since its inception in 1994 (28 individuals over age 18 and 148 individuals under age 18). Usable responses to the 8-question survey were obtained from 3 individuals over age 18 and 70 under age 18 (10.7% and 47.3% response rates, respectively). All 73 respondents reported benefiting from their enrollment in the preemployment program and were able to apply what they had learned to real situations in the workforce. All respondents stated that they had benefited from the entire program, 98.6% reported benefiting from writing resumes, 95.8% indicated that they had benefited from mock interviews, and 95.8% stated that they had enrolled in at least one extra class during their high school years and after graduation to better prepare for the world of work. Respondents also credited the program with helping them obtain a job or handle uncomfortable situations at work. (The bibliography contains 14 references. The following items are appended: survey instrument; Human Subjects Committee approval; survey instrument cover letter; and parental consent documentation.) (MN)

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Who Graduated from Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School,
Waukegan, Illinois

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Need for the Study

This study attempted to show the importance and effectiveness of teaching employment skills to adolescent students. In the fall of 1994 a Pre-Employment program was initiated at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School in Waukegan, Illinois. The first year, about 20 of 220 8th grade students enrolled in the after-school program. Instruction focused on helping students learn how to obtain a job. During the 1996 - 97 school year, the program was expanded to include school-based jobs such as landscaping and grounds maintenance, janitorial work, painting, collating the school newspaper, catering services and other job assignments. As a result of this change, interest and enrollment in the program increased to 50 students.

Since its beginning, 8th grade students have had the choice to sign up for the program, and all who want to participate are accepted into the program. The program, which has expanded from 10 weeks to 7 months, from meeting two days a week to meeting three or more days per week, from one-hour sessions to one-to-two-hour sessions, has grown to about 40 to 60 students per year. During the summer of 1997, information and resources used in the program were built into a more formal curriculum that was shared with other middle school teachers. The skills taught were transferable to the real work place. Basically, the program had a sequential curriculum through which the students met given career goals. Skills learned gave students access to career awareness and possible entry level positions in the work of world. The materials, lessons, and methods presented to students were easily absorbed and gave students the opportunity to change negative habits into positive ones. It helped students focus on thinking beyond their current capabilities and emphasized the kind of education that is necessary to acquire

the life they anticipate.

Topics were related to job search skills, interview preparation, and writing resumes.

Hands-on activities gave students confidence and interview experience. In addition to classroom activities, school-based jobs gave students training and a system to monitor progress that can achieve success in a real job.

Various methods of instruction were used to teach and relate job readiness to prepare the student for being successful on the job. Constant repetition and training played an important role in attaining satisfactory (or better) progress on the job. Lessons about going to work daily and on time, following instructions, getting along with others and being honest were skills that were stressed. Teaching skills in the workforce focused upon enabling adolescents to make a transition from the classroom to the workplace with confidence. Students who improved self-esteem, positive attitudes, work ethic skills, and explored career options for a positive choice in the workforce were at the high end of the achievement spectrum. This program seemed to influence a higher level of motivation and success achieved by adolescents on their first job.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to conduct a follow-up study to measure student accomplishments in knowledge, skills, and attitudes resulting from being in the employment program. Students achieved success through repetition of skills and monitored training, which encouraged a positive outlook when obtaining a job. Preparing adolescents for the workforce through this type of program seems to help develop skills expected in the work world. Moreover, employers welcome individuals who demonstrate good work ethic skills.

Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study was: What are perceptions of adolescents who completed a middle school program on employment skills regarding their ability to maintain satisfactory or better progress on the job?

Research Questions

1. What were the perceptions of graduates regarding the benefit from the Pre-Employment Club in obtaining jobs during their high school career?
2. What were the perceptions of graduates regarding specific benefits derived from completing the Pre-Employment Club?
3. What were the perceptions of graduates regarding the Pre-Employment Club curriculum and its work world benefit?
4. What were the perceptions of graduates regarding extra classes on employment they too to better prepare for the work world?

Definitions of Terms

For the purpose of this study, these definitions were used.

1. Attitudes : a way of thinking and behaving. (Young Students Learning Library Dictionary, 1994)
2. Related class : when students discuss topics about the job in the classroom that is related to the formal curriculum.
3. Transferable skills : learning activities that occur when teaching the steps of how to obtain a job. Hands-on activities mirror experiences that take place at a work site.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND REVIEW

Introduction

The problem of the study was to determine what are perceptions of adolescents who completed a middle school program on employment skills regarding their ability to maintain satisfactory or better progress on the job. The literature reviews various techniques and programs that portray positive aspects and success of teaching employment skills to adolescents at an early age.

The literature review is presented in three categories: (a) The Nature and Follow-Up Studies of Employability Programs, (b) Research on Employment Programs Available, and (c) Summary of Literature and Research. Additional information of literature was gathered by using the inter net, obtaining certification as a Cooperative Vocational Education Instructor, attending ISBE meetings, The Alps Conference and writing a funding agreement for a WECEP program to be established at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School.

The Nature and Follow-Up Studies of Employability Programs

A summary of representative articles that relate to unpaid school work, (volunteer), "school-to-work" programs, job shadowing, and work force preparation has outlined the importance of skills that adolescents can transfer to the work site. Studies seem to show that teaching employment skills to adolescents at an early age improves success at the work site and opportunities in growth toward independence.

WECEP (Work Experience and Career Exploration Program), received authorization to begin on November 5, 1969. The federally mandated program must obtain approval from the administration of The Wage and Hour Division of the U.S. Labor Department before going into effect. Each state funds the approved programs. WECEP is

one of several that provide carefully planned experiences and career exploration for 14 and 15 year-old youths. "The intent of the program is to help disadvantaged students increase self-esteem, explore career options, develop a positive attitude toward work, gain entry level skills, and continue in school after the age of sixteen" (Skarr & Spagnolo, 1995, p.11). WECEP was designed to meet the participants' needs interests, and abilities. Among other advantages, the program helps dropout-prone youths become reoriented and motivated toward education and prepare them for the world of work.

Beyer (1995) defined "volunteer work, such as fund-raising and sales for nonprofit charities, as well as school activities that meet the technical criteria constituting bona fide educational training experiences (as distinct from providing labor)" (p. 3).

Examples of volunteer work portray the idea of seeking work experience.

1. In a hospital, a student shadowing a nurse, following and observing but not helping.

2. In a supermarket, a student does simulated work such as practicing ringing-up baskets of groceries (collected by other students or the teacher) making change, learning assorted transactions and returning groceries to the shelves. Nothing was sold to actual customers.

3. A student entering worthless data on a company computer which is not used to conduct business. (U.S. Department of Labor Wage and Hour Division, 1994, p. 1)

Volunteer work teaches a student about life. A student is provided the opportunity to participate in several meaningful school-related work programs to gain vocational experience as a condition of graduation or a prerequisite for other school activities and while the experience is simulated, this form of education still continues to teach appropriate skills of employment. The student seeks skill training which could lead to employment at

the end of the evaluation period.

Another employment skill program which was federally funded in 1994 was the School-to-Work Act. There are three components of The School-to-Work Programs. The first one is work-based, the second one is school-based learning, and the third one is connecting activities. Work-based implies a planned occupational training program that is integrated with learning activities and content which is needed to obtain and maintain employment. According to Skarr and Spagnolo (1995), the work-based learning must involve active participation of employer representatives in its design and delivery and may occur at a school facility and or at the work site (a program that provides students with knowledge and skills needed to obtain a job).

Research on Employment Programs Available

There are several programs listed under School-to-Work. The School Program fosters programs such as apprenticeships, career academy, tech prep, internships, work simulations, and cooperative education. The New York State Education Department stated that approximately 18,000 high school students participate in state-approved work-based learning programs. Programs are divided into two categories: (a) paid experiences and (b) non-paid experiences. These programs are very successful in preparing students to move into paid work-based programs, or obtain employment when completing high school requirements.

A success story that occurred in the fall of 1997 was located in Vienna, Illinois, at the Vienna High School. The school had an enrollment of approximately 365 students of this agricultural based county. Statistics show a 6.6% chronic truancy, drop-out rate of 5.1%, mobility rate of 16% and 19% of students families were eligible to receive public assistance according to the Public Aid Office.

For the 1997-98 school year, 90 students were considered "at risk" for quitting

school. School administrators and teachers held meetings to discuss how they could meet the needs of the students. As a result of the meetings, the Vienna High School moved to a progressive outcome-based curriculum.

The curriculum aligned with the Illinois State Standards and a school-wide system of evaluation was in place to match the district's vocational program. There were 182 students who worked in a vocational sequence. The high school endorses the School-to-Work concept by offering active drop-out prevention and academic improvement programs such as WECEP, DORS (Department of Rehabilitation Services), and JTPA (Job Training Program Act). The percentage of dropouts at Vienna High School is now below that of the nationwide and or statewide dropout rate. About 75% of the school's graduates pursue some type of education beyond high school completion, whether a four-year college or a university, a local community college, or vocational-technical school. (Vienna High School, 1997, p. 2).

Another federally funded program under the Carl D. Perkins Act is Tech Prep. Vocational/ technical educators wanted to improve the curriculum and parallel the college-prep curriculum for non-college bound students. Cited in an article written by Dutton (1996), training students and employers to perform specific tasks on specific pieces of equipment was becoming impractical. Workers needed to understand the why (concepts) as well as the how (specific functions) of the equipment so they could learn to operate new equipment rapidly and to diagnose and repair it. Vo-tech educators recognized the need of students to have a solid academic foundation in math; School-to-Work requires it. Special emphasis is placed on providing work based experiences for all students and on connecting school-based and work-based experiences for students.

Churches (1996) reports that the School-to-Career Partnership is an important new

part of the curriculum. It's the fourth "R" that means Relevance, and it has a statewide effort to link homework to work. The people in business expressed how this program is the most exciting thing that has ever come to education.

The project creates working partnerships between school district, businesses, labor, parents and community organizations and incorporates workplace training into schools' curriculum. Businesses work with teachers to bring career-preparation training into the classroom and are provide internships, apprenticeships, mentoring and shadowing opportunities to students. This is probably the first time businesses and educators have talked at length about the work force of tomorrow.

The dialogue alone is a tremendous reform. (1996, p. 5)

Another technique for teaching employment skills is job shadowing. The Groundhog Job Shadow Day Coalition (2000) reported that job shadowing is an opportunity for the student who is unmotivated and who never understood the point of school. Job shadowing is a half or a full day visit to a job site. Each student experiences an opportunity to tour a job site, "shadow" an employee for at least two hours and participate in some workplace activities. The mission of Job Shadow Day is to engage students in the world of work. It's a partnership between the classroom and the workplace. Employees of the workplace conduct activities with students that demonstrate job skills and educational requirements. After the visit, the teacher reinforces program learning objectives in the classroom, which provides new ways to motivate students.

Grubb (1996) posted positive views of the job shadowing program. The program is geared to create paths for students success and future careers. The program encourages young people to think about their future and strive to understand what is needed to reach their goal. Workforce preparation is necessary for future employability youth. The skills that the future workers need have been established by national experts and published in the

SCANS report. "SCANS believes that teachers and schools must begin early to help students see the relationship between what they study and its applications in real-world contexts" (Grubb, 1996, p. 3). Several programs have been developed provide young children the opportunity to work on life skills necessary for future employment (Grubb, 1996).

Utilizing resources to help students with workforce experiences prepares them for a well- developed and employable future. Another great way to learn about the job market is through Career Unlimited Institute. It is a 4-H Youth program focused on the development of careers. "Since 1981, the Careers Unlimited Institute has been preparing teens for their future careers through programs that are formed around the teens interests. The two goals of the program are: Help young people match their talents and interests with a career. Prepare participants for interviews with future employers" (Mark, 2000, p. 1).

The program also "helps young people learn to balance work time with leisure time, gives young people a better understanding of themselves and of the career world, and helps young people enhance their personal skills" (Mark, 2000, p. 1).

Youth seeking that first "real job" have found success in the School-to-Career program located in Tennessee. The program is aimed at promoting youth employment year around to 14 through 21 year olds. It provides students with education and skills to be successful workers, productive citizens and life-long learners. Youth obtain a job with a cooperative local business, while receiving valuable career planning assistance. The program works to develop maturity skills in 14 and 15 year olds. The motto is "learning through doing" (Brinson, 1998, p. 2).

Summary of Literature and Research

1. Opportunities for adolescents are available through public funding, private industries, and school programs.

2. Employment skills taught to adolescents at an earlier age seems to result in motivation toward school and a reduction in drop-out rates.

3. The skills taught seem to increase adolescent self-esteem, level of confidence, and stability for keeping a job.

4. Finally, transferable skills learned in the classroom can be applied to the work place for obtaining a job in the community.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

Description of Research Type

The problem of the study was to determine what are perceptions of adolescents who completed a middle school program on employment skills regarding their ability to maintain satisfactory or better progress on the job? A descriptive research method utilizing a mailed survey was used to conduct the study.

Descriptive research describes and interprets what is. It is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist, opinions that are held, processes that are going on, effects that are evident, or trends that are developing.

It is primarily concerned with the present, although it often considers past events and influences as they relate to current conditions. (Best & Kahn, 1998, p.113)

The survey is a self-report of participants views after being in the Pre-Employment Program at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School in Waukegan, Illinois.

Subjects

Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School is one of the five middle schools located in Waukegan, Illinois District #60. The school population of 220 students is made up of 47% Hispanic, 34% African American, 17% Caucasian and 2% Asian students. Students who chose to participate in The Pre-Employment Program were in the 8th grade. The program began during the 1994 - 1995 school year and continues to attract a wide sampling of the 8th grade population. The majority of the students are in regular education. However, students with I.E.P.'s and students who are limited English proficient also commit themselves to the year-long program. Attendance records, resumes, survey

mailings, and statistics from the program show a higher ratio of African American females to any other ethnic group enrolled in the program.

Instrument Development and Data Collection

The survey involved participants of the 8th grade that were in The Pre-Employment Program while attending their 8th grade year at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School. Each participant of each year received a survey to complete. Participants under the age of 18 needed consent from a parent or guardian in order to receive the survey. The parent or guardian needed to return the signed consent form (Appendix D) in a stamped self-addressed envelop prior to their student receiving the survey.

Students who participated in completing and returning surveys were the total population who had participated in the Pre-Employment Club since its inception. The survey took approximately 15 to 20 minutes to complete. The survey consisted of eight questions that asked about demographics and types of jobs participants had each summer after graduating 8th grade. The job description section of the survey was fill-in-the-blank type question to measure job stability of the participants job. Four questions were fill-in-the-blank type that reflected views of how well the program prepared the participant in obtaining a job.

Instrument was reviewed by a SIUC faculty member to determine content validity for this study. Revisions were made to the questionnaire from faculty input. The Human Subjects Committee for Southern Illinois University at Carbondale reviewed the instrument and approved the project on June 4, 2001 (Appendix B).

The instrument questions were designed to provide information for each research question in this way:

Research Question 1: What were graduates' perceptions regarding the benefit from the Pre-Employment Club in obtaining jobs during their high school career?

Instrument Question 4: Do you feel that completing requirements and obtaining information from the Pre-Employment Club benefited you in obtaining jobs during your high school career?

Research Question 2: What were graduates' perceptions regarding specific benefits derived from completing the Pre-Employment Club?

Instrument Question 5: After completing the Pre-Employment Club, did you find yourself feeling more confident in filling out applications, updating resumes', interviewing for jobs and communicating with managers or bosses with problems that could or did arise? Please be specific.

Research Question 3: What were graduates' perceptions regarding the Pre-Employment Club curriculum and its work world benefit?

Instrument Question 6: What part of the Pre-Employment Club Curriculum did you like or feel benefited you the most when working in the work world?

Research Question 4: What were graduates' perceptions regarding extra classes on employment they took to better prepare for the work world?

Instrument Question 7: What extra classes or schooling on employment did you take to be better prepared for the work world? Example: computer classes, consumer education, vocational training or on the job training.

Procedures

1. On July 30, 2001, 4 and 5 years after completing the Pre-Employment Club, 28 addressed envelopes with the survey were mailed to participants who were 18 years of age or older. A letter explaining the purpose of the survey was enclosed along with a stamped self-addressed envelope to return the completed survey to the researcher.

2. On July 30, 2001, 148 addressed letters explaining the purpose of the survey to parents of participants who were under the age of 18 were mailed to the participants'

homes. A signed consent form was requested by the parent if their child would participate in the survey and a stamped self-addressed envelope was provided to return the consent form to the researcher.

3. Once the consent form from the parent/guardian was returned to the researcher, each participant received a survey and letter explaining the purpose of the research project with a stamped self-addressed envelope to return the completed survey to the researcher.

4. A 14-day time limit to receive consent forms and surveys from the participants who were 18 years of age or older was considered enough time to receive responses.

5. Consent forms not received by parent/guardians by August 14, 2001, resulted in a follow-up phone call to parents or participants to investigate why information was not returned.

6. A second survey and consent form were mailed out per phone call for a second time as stated in steps one, two, and three to non respondents.

7. When surveys from participants were received, the name of the participant was coded for confidentiality. The school term was represented with a letter. Participants name was represented with a number within each school year. The participants at the time of research were approximately age indicated and number of years in or out of high school.

			Age	year in school
1995 - 1996	A	numbers 1 through 10	19-20	2 yrs. out
1996 - 1997	B	numbers 1 through 18	18-19	1 yr. out
1997 - 1998	C	numbers 1 through 40	17-18	senior
1998 - 1999	D	numbers 1 through 50	16-17	junior
1999 - 2000	E	numbers 1 through 28	15-16	sophomore
2000 - 2001	F	numbers 1 through 20	14-15	freshman

8. The data collected from the survey were analyzed by the researcher. Consent forms and surveys that were not returned by participants were tracked with explanations

from the post office. Returned surveys were checked for completion. The success of surveys was based on the number of participants enrolled in each school year.

9. Three surveys were collected and received from respondents 18 years and older; 89 parental consent forms were returned to the researcher for students under the age of 18. Of the 89 surveys mailed to participants under the age of 18, 70 were returned to the researcher.

10. The information from the surveys were reported in Chapter 4 of the research paper.

Data Analysis

Data on instruments completed by respondents were manually tabulated and organized into frequencies and percentages. Comments in open-ended questions were categorized into common themes for presentation in tables contained in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

The problem of the study was to determine what are perceptions of adolescents who completed a middle school program on employment skills regarding their ability to maintain satisfactory progress or better on the job. Data collected from this study were obtained from a survey sent to the student participants who were enrolled in the Pre-Employment program at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School during their 8th grade year. The survey inquired about how well the Pre-Employment program prepared the students to obtain a job in the community during their pre and post high school years.

Respondent Data

Twenty eight surveys were mailed to participants of the age 18 and over. One hundred forty-eight parental consent forms were mailed out to participants under the age of 18. When a parental consent form was received by the researcher, a survey was mailed out to that participant. A follow-up phone call was made to parents who did not return the signed consent form. The following tables identified the number of students who could not be contacted by the United States Postal Service due to moving out of state, moving to an undeliverable address (within the state) without a forwarding address, or who dropped out of school without a forwarding address or imprisoned. Additional tables identify the number of consent forms returned to the researcher, how many participants returned a completed survey, and perceptions of the knowledge and skills they obtained while being in the Pre-Employment program.

Responses were received from 13; however, only 3 provided information. Table 1 indicates that 1 (3.57%) of respondents of 18 years of age and older were male while 2 (7.14%) were female.

Table 1

Respondents 18 Years or Older

Respondents	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Respondents to survey</u>		
Male	1	
Female	2	
Total	3	10.7
<u>Non respondents to survey</u>	10	35.7
Non deliverable	15	53.6
Total	3/28	100

Responses were received from 148; however, 89 provided consent for their child to receive the survey, and 70 respondents provided information. Table 2 indicates that 39 (30.7%) of respondents under 18 years of age were male while 31 (24.4%) were female.

Table 2

Respondents Under the Age of 18

Respondents	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Respondents to survey</u>		
Male	39	
Female	31	
Total	70	47.3
<u>Non respondents to survey</u>		
Non deliverable	21	14.3
Consent form	38	25.6
Survey instrument	19	12.8
Total	78	52.7
Total	70/148	100

Results According to Research Questions

Research Question 1

Research Question 1: What were graduates' perceptions regarding the benefit from the Pre-Employment Club in obtaining jobs during their high school career?

When students were asked if they felt that completing the requirements and obtaining information from the Pre-Employment Club benefited them in obtaining jobs during their high school career, all 73 (100%) indicated yes. The 3 students who responded that were 18 years of age or older indicated that they were employed their entire high school career and continued employment on after graduation. Their strong work ethic and stability enabled them to be promoted to higher positions of pay and responsibility.

Responses were received from 102; however, only 73 provided information. Table 2 indicates that 40 (39.3%) were male while 33 (32.3%) were female.

Table 3

Obtained Information To Get A Job

Respondents	<u>n</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Respondents</u>		
Male	40	39.3
Female	33	32.3
Total	73	71.6
<u>Non respondents</u>		
Survey Instrument	29	28.4
Total	102	100

Research Question 2

Research Question 2. What were graduates' perceptions regarding specific benefits derived from completing the Pre-Employment Club?

When asked, "What perceptions regarding specific benefits derived from completing the Pre-Employment Club?", respondents provided at least one section of the curriculum that they felt confident about and knew how to find resources to solve difficulties. Table 4 indicates the responses received from respondents regarding benefits they perceived from completing the Pre-Employment Club. The benefit identified most frequently was the whole program, while the benefit identified least was consumer service communication.

Table 4

Benefits from Completing the Pre-Employment Club

Benefit	Number identifying response
Whole program	73
Writing resumes'	72
Mock interviews	70
Jobs around the school	65
Filling out applications	60
Facts on how to interview: listening, speaking, attitude	57
Work ethic skills: attendance, punctuality, following through	27
Communication with management and co-workers	27
Procedures for seeking employment	22
How to react to different environments of work ethics	18
How to handle uncomfortable questions asked at an interview	16
Future goals	16
Constructive criticism	16
Customer service communication	14
How to work cooperatively among a diverse population	11

Research Question 3

Research Question 3. What were graduates' perceptions regarding the Pre-Employment Club curriculum and its work-world benefit?

When asked, "What part of the Pre-Employment Club curriculum did you like or feel benefited you the most when working in the work world?", respondents provided the benefits as listed in Table 5. Many of the benefits listed were similar those given in Table 4. The benefit identified most frequently was writing resumes', while the benefit identified least frequently was how to treat others as well as ourselves.

Table 5

Pre-Employment Club Benefits

Benefits	Number identifying response
Writing resumes*	72
Working with others	42
Confidence in inquiring about a job position	41
Interview techniques: What to say and how to act when interviewing	37
Completing applications	32
Understanding how to utilize resources to obtain a job	22
What makes a good employee	17
Being independent, making good choices	8
Follow-up after interviews	7
Being responsible and following through on tasks	6
Setting goals and budgeting	6
How to treat others as well as ourselves	3

Research Question 4

Research Question 4. What were graduates' perceptions regarding extra classes on employment they took to better prepare for the work world?

Table 6 presents responses received from graduates when asked, "What extra classes or schooling on employment did you take to be better prepared for the work

world?" The class identified most frequently was keyboarding, while the class identified least frequently was JROTC/drill team.

Table 6

Extra Employment Classes Completed

Course	Number identifying response
Keyboarding	70
Consumer education	40
Job training companies	28
Introduction to business	11
No additional classes	8
Junior college tech campus	5
Accounting	4
Marketing	4
Advanced computer classes	2
JROTC/drill team	1

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The problem of this study was what are perceptions of adolescents who completed a middle school program on employment skills regarding their ability to maintain satisfactory or better progress on the job.

A review of literature indicated that employment programs for adolescents are available through public funding, private industries, and school programs. Employment skills taught to adolescents at an earlier age seem to result in motivation toward school, and a focus of goal(s) oriented toward the future. Employment programs seem to prepare students for the world of work. These programs prepare students for what to expect when trying to find a job. The skills taught increase knowledge, alter attitudes and perceptions to obtain employment. The hands-on activities and repetition of skills seemed to help adolescents increase self-esteem, confidence, and stability for keeping a job. Teaching transferable skills in the classroom mirrors real-life experiences in the work place, teaches adolescents what to expect, and instills an initiative to go after their future goals.

The survey instrument was a self-report of participant views after being in the Pre-Employment Club at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School in Waukegan, Illinois. The survey consisted of 8 questions and took about 15 - 20 minutes to complete. The questions solicited reflected views about how well the program prepared the participants to obtain a job. The instrument was divided into 2 categories. The first category was for participants who were 18 years of age and older. The second category was for participants who were under 18 years of age. A fill-in-the-blank answer gave respondents a broad area to cover which was based on specific lessons or topics that participants feel they benefited from.

The opportunity for more than one choice was left up to the participant.

The survey population consisted of 176 students who had participated in the Pre-Employment Club since its inception. The population consisted of 28 participants who were 18 years of age and older. One hundred forty-eight participants were under the age of 18 and required parental/guardian consent to participate in the survey. The surveys and parental/guardian consent forms were mailed along with a cover letter. The cover letter gave the participants pertinent information regarding the survey. The survey was mailed out beginning June 30, 2001. Of the 28 surveys mailed to the participants who were 18 years of age or older returned 3 responses resulting in a 10.7% rate of return. Twenty-five participants of the 28 did not return the survey or were unable to be reached through the U.S. Postal Service resulted in a 89.3% rate of return. Of the 148 surveys mailed to participants who were under the age of 18 returned 70 responses resulting in a 47.3% rate of return. Seventy-eight participants of the 148 did not return the survey, parental/guardian consent form, or were unable to be reached through the U.S. Postal Service resulted in a 52.7% rate of return. The data was reviewed and tallied from the respondents to answer the research questions.

Findings

Findings for this study are discussed relative to the 4 research questions and 4 instrument questions.

Research Questions

1. What were graduates' perceptions regarding the benefit from the Pre-Employment Club in obtaining jobs during their high school career?

Seventy-three (100%) of the respondents indicated that they benefited from being enrolled in the program and could apply what they learned to a real situation in the

workforce.

2. What were graduates' perceptions regarding specific benefits derived from completing the Pre-Employment Club?

Responses from 73 (100 %) participants indicated that they benefited from at least 3 sections of the curriculum when looking for a job in the work world. Seventy-three respondents (100%) indicated that they benefited from the whole program. Seventy-two respondents (98.6%) indicated that they benefited from writing resumes'. Seventy respondents (95.8%) indicated that they benefited from mock interviews.

3. What were graduates' perceptions regarding the Pre-Employment Club curriculum and its work world benefit?

Responses from 73 (100%) participants indicated at least 5 sections of the curriculum benefited them when inquiring about a job or when difficulties arose on the job. Participants were able to refer to material and hands-on experiences to help prepare themselves or to solve problems that arose. Seventy-two (98.6%) respondents indicated that they benefited from writing resumes. Forty-two (57.5%) respondents indicated that they benefited from working with others. Forty-one (56.1%) respondents indicated that they benefited in having confidence when inquiring about a job. Thirty-seven (50.6%) respondents indicated that they benefited in learning interviewing techniques to know what to say and how to act in an interview situation. Thirty (43.8%) respondents indicated that they benefited in knowing how to complete applications.

4. What were graduates' perceptions regarding extra classes on employment they took to better prepare for the work world?

Seventy (95.8%) respondents indicated they had enrolled in at least 1 extra class during their high school years and after graduation to become better prepared for the work world. The extra class respondents were enrolled in was keyboarding. Forty (54.7%) respondents indicated that they had enrolled in a consumer education course.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were derived from the results of this study:

1. All 176 (100%) participants were enrolled in the Pre-Employment Club at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School in Waukegan, Illinois during their 8th grade year in middle school.
2. All 176 (100%) participants were taught and monitored by Elaine Kallianis the Pre-Employment Club instructor and sponsor.
3. Each student of the 176 (100%) participants was constantly reminded to complete a resume' to use for future reference.
4. An effort to employ participants for the summer jobs was a focus for every participant each school year.
5. Participants learned to locate and use valuable resources to obtain jobs.
6. Participants learned the importance of first impressions and how to present themselves to possible employers.
7. Participants demonstrated the ability to transfer skills learned in the Pre-Employment Club to real life.
8. Participants were able to use the information from the Pre-Employment Club to acquire jobs during their pre and post high school years.
9. Participants were able to use sections of the curriculum to help them obtain a job or to problem solve uncomfortable situations at the work site.
10. Participants broadened their views on career education by enrolling in additional classes that would benefit or better prepare them for the work world.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. To publish this research paper in an Educational Journal to assist other

districts in their decision toward creating Pre-Employment Clubs.

2. To incorporate the Pre-Employment Club program as an elective for 8th graders in the Waukegan Unit School District #60, so students become aware of the various careers and to build the characteristics of a good employee.

3. The Illinois State Board of Education has wholeheartedly approved funding for a WECEP Program to be placed at Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School, however, there were no funds available for this 2001 - 2002 school year. This research paper should be used to reinforce the need to locate funding for this type of education.

4. To improve the curriculum by taking classes, attending workshops, and networking with business partnerships to update facts of the work world and to create a working relationship among employees and employers.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Employment Skills Survey

Please circle or answer the following questions.

1. You were a participant of the Pre-Employment Club for the following school term.

1995 - 1996 1996 - 1997 1997 - 1998 1998 - 1999 1999 - 2000 2000 - 2001

2. Your gender is: female _____ male _____

3. The following question pertains to your job employment in the community since you were involved with the Pre-Employment Club and graduated from 8th grade. Please list place of employment, job title, length of time employed, and if you left on good terms, fired, laid-off, or found a higher paying job. If you were not employed during a school term or summer due to family commitments, college prep courses during high school years, playing sports, or attending summer school, please indicate.

First summer after graduating 8th grade. _____ indicate school term graduated

place of employment: _____

job title: _____

dates employed: _____

reason for leaving: _____

Second school term or summer after graduating 8th grade.

place of employment: _____

job title: _____

dates employed: _____

reason for leaving: _____

Third school term or summer after graduating 8th grade.

place of employment: _____

job title: _____

dates employed: _____

reason for leaving: _____

Fourth school term or summer after graduating 8th grade.

place of employment: _____

job title: _____

dates employed: _____

reason for leaving: _____

Fifth school term or summer after graduating 8th grade.

place of employment: _____

job title: _____

dates employed: _____

reason for leaving: _____

First job after graduating High School.

place of employment: _____

job title: _____

dates employed: _____

reason for leaving: _____

4. Do you feel that completing the requirements and obtaining information from the Pre-Employment Club benefited you in obtaining jobs during your high school career?

yes _____

no _____

5. After completing the Pre-Employment Club, did you find yourself feeling more confident in filling out applications, updating resumes, interviewing for jobs and communicating with managers or bosses with problems that could or did arise?

6. What part of the Pre-Employment Club Curriculum did you like or feel it benefited you the most when working in the work world?

7. What extra classes or schooling on employment did you take to be better prepared for the work world? Example: computer classes, consumer education, vocational training, or on the job training.

8. Indicate how you were hired for the jobs listed in question #3. Was it a referral from a relative or friend, a newspaper ad, or did you inquire about a position of employment that you were interested in?

place of employment: _____

how were you hired: _____

place of employment: _____

how were you hired: _____

place of employment: _____

how were you hired: _____

place of employment: _____

how were you hired: _____

If you have any questions, please feel to contact me at Robert E. Abbott Middle School: (847)

360-5487 or on my pager: (847) 210-9119. Thank-you for completing this survey.

APPENDIX B
HUMAN SUBJECT COMMITTEE APPROVAL



SIUC HSC FORM A

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ACTIVITIES INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

By making this application, I certify that I have read and understand the University's policies and procedures governing research activities involving human subjects. I agree to comply with the letter and spirit of those policies. I acknowledge my obligation to:

1. Accept responsibility for the research described, including work by students under my direction.
2. Obtain written approval from the Human Subjects Committee of any changes from the originally approved protocol BEFORE implementing those changes.
3. Retain signed consent forms in a secure location separate from the data for at least three years after the completion of the research.
4. Immediately report any adverse effects of the study on the subjects to the Chairperson of the Human Subjects Committee, SIUC, Carbondale, Illinois - 618-453-4533 and to the Director of the Office of Research Development and Administration, SIUC - 618-453-4531.

Project Title

Does teaching Employment skills to
Adolescent students benefit them in
obtaining and maintaining satisfactory
employment on the job.

Researcher(s) or Project Director(s)
Please print or type name below signature.

Elaine Kallianis

Elaine Kallianis

5/4/01
Date

Researcher's Advisor (required for all student projects)
Please print or type name below signature.

James Asilew

6-5-01

Date

The request submitted by the above-named researcher(s) was approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee.

This approval is valid for one year from the approval date. Researchers must request an extension to continue the research after that date. This approval form must be included in all Master's theses/research papers and Doctoral dissertations involving human subjects that are submitted to the Graduate School.

Anthony J. Cervo

Chairperson, Southern Illinois University Human Subjects Committee

6-1-01
Date

APPENDIX C
SURVEY INSTRUMENT COVER LETTER

Dear Participant:

I am an off campus graduate student seeking my Master's degree in the Work- force Education and Development Program at Southern Illinois University. My primary interest is to see if teaching employment skills to adolescent students benefited them in obtaining and maintaining satisfactory progress on the job. The survey will take 15 - 20 minutes to complete. The targeted students will be the ones who were enrolled in the Pre-Employment Club while attending Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School. Completion and return of this survey is on a voluntary consent to participate in this study. Please use the return envelope provided. All the responses will be kept strictly confidential. A coding system will be used to eliminate the names. Each participant will be given a letter and number to correlate the school term attended and name. Only I will have access to the surveys. The code list of names will be destroyed once the completion of the survey results have been returned and tallied. The confidentiality of your name will never be revealed. "I will take all reasonable steps to protect your identity and the confidentiality of the records will be maintained within legal limits." You do not write your name on the survey. Identity questions such as gender and year that you were enrolled in the Pre-Employment Club will be asked on the survey. I will be in charge of the research project. Dr. James Sullivan is my advisor. He can be reached at Southern Illinois University Work force Education Department, Carbondale, Illinois 62902-4709. I can be reached at: Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School, 1319 Washington Street, Waukegan, Illinois 60085 (847) 360-5487 or on my pager (847) 210-9119

This project has been reviewed and approved by the SIUC Human Subjects Committee. Questions concerning your rights as a participant in this research may be addressed to the Committee Chairperson, Office of Research Development and Administration, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois 62901-4709, phone number (618) 453-4533.

Thank-you in advance for taking the time to complete this survey.

Elaine Kallianis

APPENDIX D
PARENTAL CONSENT DOCUMENTATION

Dear parent:

Your student has the opportunity to participate in a survey regarding his or her employment record starting from when they graduated 8th grade to the present. Students chosen for the survey must have been in the Pre-Employment Club while attending Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School. The reason for the parental consent is that your child is under the age of 18 and considered a minor. All the responses will be kept confidential. A coding system will be used to eliminate the names. If you have any questions, please contact me at:

Robert E. Abbott Accelerated Middle School
1319 Washington Street
Waukegan, Illinois 60085
(847) 360-5487 or on my pager
(847) 210-9119

If you agree with the information given, please sign and return in the enclosed envelope so I may forward the survey to your student.

Thank-you in advance for allowing your student to participate.

Elaine Kallianis

Elaine Kallianis

I have read the material above, and any questions I asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand a copy of this form will be made available to me for the relevant information and phone numbers. I realize that I may withdraw without prejudice at any time.

Students Name _____

Parent Signature _____